



Trooper Michael L. "Mike" Newton

Badge #799
10-42 ... May 22, 2003

I first met Trooper Michael L. Newton, his wife, Shonnie, and sons, Devon and Tyler, when we all had dinner together as a zone at the Higginsville Pizza Hut. Mike was fairly quiet that night, but seemed to fit in instantly as a member of the group. Over the following months his field training officer, Sergeant D. Shane Green, taught Mike all the aspects of the job. Since I had just gone through the field training experience with Shane myself, I knew what challenges Mike was going through and what was expected of him.

Mike and I became close. He and his family would often get together with my family. They'd visit while Mike and I would review his reports. Although, all too often, it would result in Mike and our sons playing and roughhousing together, while I would be stuck looking at his reports.

Mike developed over the next few months into a hard working, excellent trooper who truly was "Missouri's finest". He always had a smile on his face and a sense of humor. We often got together and worked laser speed enforcement on the interstate. He was very competitive and enjoyed his profession.

Mike and I competed on a daily basis to be the first one to take someone to jail. I remember on one occasion, Mike called

me while he was en route to jail with three intoxicated drivers. I just about dropped the phone. I said, "You're full of it. How could you be on the way to jail with three people? I only heard you make one traffic stop."

He related that while on an interstate traffic stop with an intoxicated subject he was nearly struck by an eastbound pickup traveling at a slow rate of speed. He said the pickup moved to the shoulder in front of the vehicle he had stopped. Mike said he observed the driver of the pickup switch places with the female passenger as the vehicle traveled to a stop several hundred feet in front of his vehicle stop. He stated he quickly placed his driver under arrest, secured him in his patrol car and moved his vehicle in behind the pickup.

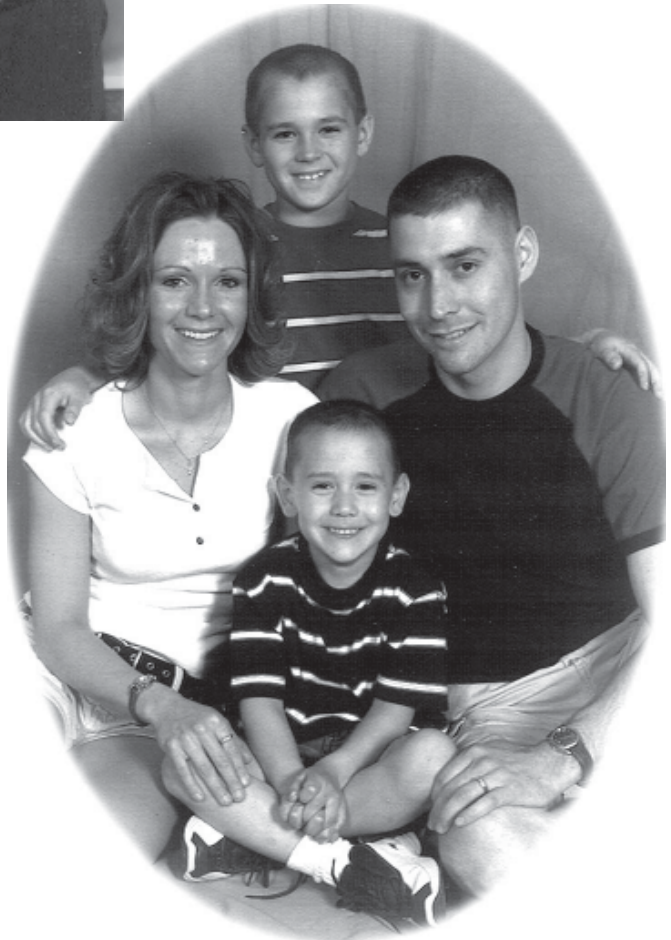
Upon contacting the occupants of the pickup, he arrested both subjects for driving while intoxicated. Apparently, the male driver was so intoxicated, he believed Mike had activated his emergency equipment in an attempt to stop him. While moving his pickup to the shoulder, the driver convinced his intoxicated wife to switch seats with him in order to avoid another DWI arrest. Needless to say, his plan failed. To date, I have never again seen this type of scenario. And, yes, in case you are wondering, Mike won the competition that night.

I was asked to write something about Mike for this publication, detailing what kind of person he was. It is a difficult task—describing someone's life on paper. If I had to write about all of the funny things I ob-



Michael and Tyler Newton, 2001.

The Michael Newton family: Shonnie, Devon, Mike, and Tyler.



served and heard alone, I would probably run out of paper. I remember on one snowy day then-Corporal D. Shane Green, Mike, and I, were at the Odessa zone office while Sergeant Nate Brown was at the Troop A sergeants' meeting.

I commented to them both that Sgt. Brown had conveniently shoveled a path from his patrol car driver's door to the zone office door, but had failed to shovel the remaining portion of the sidewalk. We sat around for several minutes laughing about it and discussing the obvious lack of zone spirit exhibited by our leader, and what options were available to us for retribution. Mike, being the gutsy guy that he was, took it upon himself to commandeer a large MoDOT end-loader. He quickly amassed a

pile of snow around Sgt. Brown's patrol car that would have taken several weeks to melt down if the weather turned warm. After laughing for several minutes, we all left the zone office, leaving Sgt. Brown's vehicle entombed.

Anybody who knows Sgt. Brown knows he is very particular about his vehicle, equipment, and uniform. We definitely were not going to stick around to see his expression when he arrived back from troop headquarters and saw his vehicle buried in snow. Mike called me several times later that day asking me if I heard anything from Nate. From the amount of telephone calls I received, I thought he seemed a little wor-

ried about what Nate's response would be.

It was not long after he returned to the zone that I received a call from Nate inundated with laughter about the incident. Although I'm sure with the type of personality Mike had, it probably would not have mattered if Nate had been upset or not. Mike was without a doubt the bravest guy I've known. With Mike you never had to wonder if he would do his job in times of stress. He proved himself on more than one occasion as a valuable zone mate who never appeared to be afraid of anything.

Another time Mike made me laugh

was when we took our wives out to eat at the Lone Star Steakhouse restaurant in Independence, MO. My wife pretended to trip Mike when we were all walking toward the door to leave. Mike quickly ad-libbed, and fell to the floor flopping around like he was having a seizure. This, of course, drew numerous looks from the diners seated around us and embarrassed my wife. The



This memorial is located on the right-hand shoulder of Interstate 70 near where Tpr. Michael L. Newton was killed in the line of duty in 2003. The Little Piney Creek bridge named in honor of Tpr. Michael L. Newton, who grew up in the area (Troop I).

incident probably deterred my wife from attempting to “aggravate” Mike in public again.

On May 22, 2003, at 0659 hours, Mike was killed in the line of duty by a careless driver. That day, as was usual for Mike, he did everything right. He was doing his job making the roadways safe for all of us. He positioned his car like he was supposed to, and was conducting a proper “looking beyond the stop” field interview with a violator. He did everything right and still lost his life.

Our zone and fellow Lafayette County officers got together and erected a memorial to Mike at the 47-mile marker of Interstate 70 shortly after that day. Every day that goes by, those of us that are left remember and honor our fallen brother. He may be gone from this Earth, but he will never be forgotten. Although time continues, people I run into still ask me about Mike and his family. The cashier’s at the local Pilot truck stop often tell me they miss “Smiley” and are sorry for our loss. They told me every time they saw Mike he had a smile on his face and always had something nice to say.

Mike was a loving father, husband, and son. He always played with his children and spent time with them. He would call his mother on a daily basis and check in with her just to let her know that everything was okay. Mike was proud of his family and was always talking about his parents, Garry and Bobbi. He truly was a family man, a great brother, and a friend. He will be missed by all of us who knew him.



(Tpr. R. Brooks McGinnis, Troop A, wrote this article for this 75th anniversary project.

Trooper Michael L. Newton, 25, was killed in a traffic crash on May 22, 2003, on Interstate 70 at the 47-mile marker. Tpr. Newton had stopped a vehicle for a traffic violation. He and the driver were sitting in the patrol vehicle. A pickup pulling a flatbed, gooseneck trailer traveled onto the shoulder of I-70 and struck the patrol car. The impact caused the patrol car to burst into flames. Tpr. Newton was killed inside the car. Witnesses pulled the other man from the passenger window of the patrol car. Tpr. Newton was survived by his wife, Shonnie; sons, Devon and Tyler; and his parents, Garry and Bobbie Newton. Garry is employed as a building and grounds maintenance supervisor at Troop I Headquarters.

On September 20, 2004, the two newly constructed bridges over the Little Piney Creek on Interstate 44 in Phelps County were named the Trooper Mike L. Newton Memorial Bridge.)